



The Prophetic Role of Noah

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The Prophet Noah succeeded the Prophet Adam. He was born in the tenth generation descended from Adam. There was an extraordinary happening during the life of Noah—that of the Great Flood. This exceptional event came to pass in accordance with God's plan. Although it took place in the pre-historical period, it appears that God wanted this event associated with Noah and his Ark to be discovered in the post-historical period, so that it would become a sign for people of future generations, something from which they would learn a lesson in life. No details of this are traceable in recorded history, except for the accounts given in two major works, the Quran and the Bible. The related references from both these sources are given below.

The following is a quotation from Chapter 71 of the Quran, titled 'Noah':

In the name of God, the Most Gracious, the Most Merciful

We sent Noah forth to his people, saying, 'Warn your people before there comes upon them a grievous punishment.' [Noah] said, 'My people! I am but a plain warner to you, that you should worship God [alone] and be conscious of Him. Pay heed to me. He will forgive

your sins and will grant you respite till an appointed time. When the time appointed by God arrives, it cannot be postponed, if you only knew.' He said, 'My Lord! I have called my people night and day but my pleas have only increased their aversion. Every time I have called to them, so that You might forgive them, they have only thrust their fingers into their ears, covered themselves up with their garments, grown obstinate, and given themselves up to arrogance. Then I called them openly, and spoke to them in public and in private.' Then I said, 'Ask forgiveness of your Lord. Surely He is the most forgiving. He will send down abundant rain from the sky for you, increase your wealth and sons; and grant you gardens and waterways. What is the matter with you that you deny the greatness of God, when He has created you through different stages of existence? Do you not see how God has created the seven heavens one above another, and made the moon therein a light, and made the sun a lamp, how God has produced you from the earth and caused you to grow, how He will then return you to it and bring you forth again, how God has spread the earth out for you so that you may walk along its spacious paths?' Noah supplicated, 'Lord, they have disobeyed me, and followed those whose

wealth and children have only added to their ruin; and they have hatched a mighty plot, and they said [to their followers], “Do not ever abandon your deities: abandon neither *Wadd*, nor *Suwa'*, and neither *Yaghuth*, nor *Yauq* nor *Nasr*!” They have led many astray; so lead the wrongdoers to further error.’

They were drowned and sent to Hell for their misdeeds; they found no one to help them against God. Noah prayed, ‘O my Lord! Do not leave on earth a single one of those who deny the truth—if You leave any, they will misguide Your servants, and they will beget none but sinners and deniers of truth—Lord! Forgive me and my parents and every true believer who enters my house, forgive all the believing men and believing women; and bestow no increase upon the wrongdoers except in ruin.’ (71:1-28)

Chapter 11 of the Quran also provides a detailed account of Prophet Noah and his mission. The relevant verses are quoted below.

God’s will was revealed to Noah, ‘No more of your people will believe in you than those who already believe; do not grieve, therefore, over what they have been doing. Build the Ark under Our eyes and in accordance with Our revelation. Do not plead with Me concerning

the evil-doers. They shall certainly be drowned. So he began to build the Ark, and whenever leaders of his people passed by, they scoffed at him. He said, 'If you are scoffing at us, we shall scoff at you [and your ignorance], just as you scoff at us: you will soon come to know who will receive a humiliating punishment, and find unleashed against him an everlasting punishment.' When Our command came, and water gushed forth in torrents, We said to Noah, 'Take into the Ark a pair from every species, and your own family—except those on whom the sentence has already been passed, and all the true believers.' But only a few believed along with him. Noah said, 'Embark on it. In the name of God, it shall set sail and cast anchor. Truly, my Lord is forgiving and merciful.' The Ark sailed along with them through mountainous waves. Noah called out to his son who stood apart, 'O my son! Embark with us and do not be among the deniers!' He replied, 'I shall seek refuge on a mountain, which will save me from the water.' Noah cried, 'Today there is no refuge for anyone from God's command except for those to whom He shows mercy!' Thereupon, a wave swept in between them, and Noah's son was among those who were drowned. A voice cried out, 'Earth, swallow up your waters. O sky,

cease your rain.' The waters receded. The command was fulfilled. The Ark came to rest on Mount Judi. It was said, 'Away with the wrong-doing people.' Noah called out to his Lord, saying, 'My Lord, my son was a part of my family. Your promise was surely true. You are the most just of all judges.' God said, 'Noah, he was not one of your family. For, indeed, he was unrighteous in his conduct. Do not question Me about something of which you have no knowledge; I admonish you lest you become like an ignorant man.' He said, 'My Lord, I take refuge with You from asking You something of which I have no knowledge. If You do not forgive me and show me mercy, I shall be one of the losers.' God said, 'Noah, go ashore in peace; Our blessings upon you and upon the people who are with you and upon some of the descendants of those who are with you. [As for the unrighteous] We shall grant provision for a time; then a grievous punishment from Us shall afflict them.'

(ii:36-48)

The story of the Prophet Noah is recounted in detail in the Book of Genesis in the Bible. The relevant verses are quoted below:

This is the genealogy of Noah. Noah was a just man, perfect in his generations. Noah walked with God. And

Noah begot three sons: Shem, Ham, and Japheth. The earth also was corrupt before (in the sight of) God, and the earth was filled with violence. So God looked upon the earth, and indeed it was corrupt; for all flesh had corrupted their way on the earth. And God said to Noah, “The end of all flesh has come before Me; for the earth is filled with violence through them; and behold, I will destroy them with the earth. “Make yourself an ark of gopher wood; make rooms in the ark, and cover it inside and outside with pitch. “And this is how you shall make it: the length of the ark shall be three hundred cubits, its width fifty cubits, and its height thirty cubits. You shall make a window for the ark, and finish it to a cubit from above; and set the door of the ark in its side. You shall make it with lower, second, and third decks. “And behold, I Myself am bringing the flood of waters on the earth, to destroy from under heaven all flesh in which is the breath of life; and everything that is on the earth shall die. “But I will establish My covenant with you; and you shall go into the ark—you, your sons, your wife, and your sons’ wives with you. “And every living thing of all flesh, you shall bring two of every sort into the ark, to keep them alive with you; they shall be male and female. “Of the birds after their kind, of animals

after their kind, and of every creeping thing of the earth after its kind, two of every kind will come to you to keep them alive. And you shall take for yourself of all food that is eaten, and you shall gather it to yourself; and it shall be food for you and for them.” Thus Noah did; according to all that God commanded him, so he did. (Genesis, 6:9-22)

Then the Lord said to Noah, “Come into the ark, you and all your household, because I have seen that you are righteous before Me in this generation. “You shall take with you seven each of every clean animal, a male and his female; two each of animals that are unclean, a male and his female; “also seven each of birds of the air, male and female, to keep the species alive on the face of all the earth. “For after seven more days, I will cause it to rain on the earth forty days and forty nights, and I will destroy from the face of the earth all living things that I have made.” And Noah did according to all that the Lord had commanded him. Noah was six hundred years old when the flood of waters was on the earth. So Noah with his sons, his wife and his sons’ wives went into the ark because of the waters of the flood. Of clean beasts, of beasts that are unclean, of birds, and of everything that creeps on the earth, two by two they went into the

ark to Noah, male and female, as God had commanded Noah. And it came to pass after seven days that the waters of the flood were on the earth. In the six hundredth year of Noah's life, in the second month, the seventeenth day of the month, on that day all the fountains of the great deep were broken up, and the windows of the heaven were opened. And the rain was on the earth forty days and forty nights. On the very same day Noah and Noah's sons, Shem and Ham and Japheth, and Noah's wife and the three wives of his sons with them, entered the ark - they and every beast after its kind, and all the cattle after their kind, and every creeping thing that creeps on the earth after its kind, every bird of every sort. And they went into the ark of Noah, two by two, of all flesh in which is the breath of life. So those that entered, male and female of all flesh, went in as God had commanded him; and the Lord shut him in. Now the flood was on the earth forty days. The waters increased and lifted up the ark, and it rose high above the earth. The water prevailed and greatly increased on the earth, and the ark moved about on the surface of the waters. And the waters prevailed exceedingly on the earth, and all the high hills under the whole heaven were covered. The waters prevailed

fifteen cubits upward, and the mountains were covered. And all flesh died that moved on the earth: birds and cattle and beasts and every creeping thing that creeps on the earth, and every man. All in whose nostrils was the breath of the spirit of life, all that was on the dry land, died. So He destroyed all living things which were on the face of the ground: both man and cattle, creeping thing and bird of the air. They were destroyed from the earth. Only Noah and those who were with him in the ark remained alive. And the waters prevailed on the earth one hundred and fifty days. (Genesis, 7:1-24)

Then God remembered Noah and every living thing, and all the animals that were with him in the ark. And God made a wind to pass over the earth, and the waters subsided. The fountains of the deep and the windows of heaven were also stopped, and the rain from heaven was restrained. And the waters receded continually from the earth. At the end of the hundred and fifty days the waters decreased. Then the ark rested in the seventh month, on the seventeenth day of the month, on the mountains of Ararat. And the waters decreased continually until the tenth month. In the tenth month, on the first day of the month, the tops of the mountains were seen. So it came to pass, at the end of forty days,

that Noah opened the window of the ark which he had made. Then he sent out a raven, which kept going to and fro until the waters had dried up from the earth. He also set out from himself a dove, to see if the waters had abated from the face of the ground. But the dove found no resting place for the sole of her foot, and she returned into the ark to him, for the waters were on the face of the whole earth. So he put out his hand and took her, and drew her into the ark to himself. And he waited yet another seven days, and again he sent the dove out from the ark. Then the dove came to him in the evening, and behold, a freshly plucked olive leaf was in her mouth; and Noah knew that the waters were abated from the earth. So he waited yet another seven days, and sent out the dove; which did not return to him any more. And it came to pass in the six hundred and first year, in the first month, the first day of the month, that the waters were dried up from the earth; and Noah removed the covering of the ark and looked, and indeed the surface of the ground was dry. And in the second month, on the twenty-seventh day of the month, the earth was dried. Then God spoke to Noah, saying, "Go out of the ark, you and your wife and your sons and your sons' wives with you. Bring out with you every living thing of all flesh that is with you, birds and cattle and

every creeping thing that creeps on the earth, that they may abound on the earth, and be fruitful and multiply on the earth.” So Noah went out, and his sons and his wife and his sons’ wives with him. Every beast, every creeping thing, every bird, and whatever creeps on the earth, according to their families, went out of the ark. Then Noah built an altar to the Lord, and took of every clean animal and of every clean bird and offered burnt offerings on the altar. And the Lord smelled a soothing aroma. Then the Lord said in His heart, “I will never again curse the ground for man’s sake, although the imagination of man’s heart is evil from his youth; nor will I again destroy every living thing as I have done. While the earth remains, seed time and harvest, and cold and heat, and winter and summer, and day and night shall not cease.” (Genesis, 8:1-22)

A Review

The mission of the Prophet Noah was the same as the mission of all the other prophets. All the prophets, from the Prophet Adam to the Prophet Muhammad, who came to this world, had the single mission of making man aware of the creation plan of God. They came to tell people that the present world is a testing ground.

Here, man has been given freedom in order to test him as to whether he makes proper use of his freedom or misuses it. This state of affairs will last for an appointed time. Thereafter, Doomsday will set in and in the words of the Quran: the present world will be substituted for another world, where those who succeed in the test will find a place in eternal paradise, while those who fail in the test will be doomed to hell.

For a long period of time, the Prophet Noah strove in every possible way to make his community understand the truth. A few people accepted his message but the majority did not pay any heed to him. Finally, a time came when it became clear that no one else would respond to his message. Indeed, society had become so thoroughly corrupt that any child born into it came under its corrupt influence.

At that time the Prophet Noah prayed in accordance with the will of God and that event came to pass which is known as the Great Flood. By God's command the Prophet Noah built a large ark. Noah and the believers boarded the ark, while the unbelievers were drowned. The righteous were saved and held deserving of paradise, whereas the unrighteous were destroyed and deserved nothing but eternal damnation.

God gave an example in the form of this event to warn mankind of the impending flood at the end of human history, of a far more devastating nature, which has been termed 'Doomsday' in the Quran. After Doomsday, according to the divine plan, a second phase of human life will begin. This phase of the life in the hereafter will be both ideal and eternal.

Adam was the first man as well as first prophet. The Sharia (divine commandments) given by God to Adam was followed by his successors. But, gradually, decadence set in among them. This decline acquired the form of a personality cult.

Initially, they began to hold their elders, *Wadd, Suwa'*, *Yaghuth, Yauq, Nasr* (71:23), in reverence after they had passed away. This feeling of reverence gradually gave way to a belief in their holiness. Finally, they began to carve statues of them and worship them.

When corruption reached this stage, God sent the Prophet Noah to them. According to a biblical statement, the Prophet Noah was descended from Adam in the tenth generation after him. God granted Noah an extraordinarily long life spanning 950 years. The chapter 'Noah' of the Quran gives the essence of dawah. Like other prophets, Noah's call also focused

basically on two things—monotheism and the world Hereafter.

But the people had become so corrupt that, except for a few people, they were not ready to accept the call of dawah. The Quran tells us about their response to the dawah call. Their elders said to their followers, “Do not ever abandon your deities: abandon neither Wadd, nor Suwa, and neither *Yaghuth*, nor *Yauq* nor *Nasr*!” (71:23)

Such conclusions are the result of wrong comparisons. To Noah’s people, on the one hand, he was the prophet of the present, who appeared to them like a common man, while on the other, were their revered leaders of the past around whom their story-tellers had woven fascinating stories to exalt their status. In this self-styled comparison Noah appeared to be a common man (11: 27). On the contrary, the personalities of the past appeared extraordinary, invested with greatness. It was this wrong comparison that had produced false conviction in them and they were emboldened to reject their contemporary prophet.

When it became clear that no more of Noah’s people were going to accept the faith, God willed that the evil people should be destroyed by a great flood and the good people saved. Archaeological evidence shows

that the people of Noah lived in the region situated between the Rivers Tigris and Euphrates, which was called Mesopotamia.

Noah's Ark

Those who deny a prophet prove that they are not willing to live in this world of God in accordance with God's creation plan. But the rejection of a prophet is no simple matter. Such deniers lose the respite to live any longer in this world of God. That is why they are destroyed by one calamity or another. (29:40)

We learn from the Quran that a different method was adopted in case of the addressees of Noah. It was the destruction of the unrighteous by a Great Flood, the righteous were saved by means of an Ark. The special reason for this has been described in the Quran in two verses: "We saved him and those who were with him in the Ark and made the event a sign for mankind." (29:15). At another place the Quran has this to say, "We have left this as a sign: but will anyone take heed?" (54:15)

This means that in the case of Noah, the method of the Ark was adopted so that it might remain preserved and become, for future generations, a means of knowing the creation plan of God.

The Ark and the Flood

Noah's people inhabited Mesopotamia. By the command of God, a Great Flood hit this region. According to known history, it was a unique flood.

When the waters rose high, the Ark began to float, and it could have taken any direction but, at God's behest, it sailed towards Turkey.

Apparently, this happened because the range of hills near Mesopotamia provided conditions conducive to the formation of glaciers. This range of hills is known as Judi or Ararat. The Ark travelled about 1600 km, finally reaching Mount Judi in the eastern part of Turkey, where it ran aground.

After the floodwaters had subsided, the believers came out of the Ark. Of those, three were Noah's sons – Ham, Sam, Yafis (Japheth). The later human generations are mainly the offspring of the three sons of Noah. It is believed that Japheth settled in some area of Europe, Ham settled in Africa and Sam (Shem) settled in Asia. The generations up to the time of Noah had been the direct offspring of Adam. After Noah the human race, which spread across the world, was mostly the offspring of the three sons of Noah.

The Story of Noah

The people who had been saved in Noah's Ark settled in different parts of the world. Gradually, they multiplied and in different races, spread all over the globe. These people told the story of the Great Flood to the next generations. That is why the story of the Great Flood is found in one form or the other in all nations. However, for a long period of time, Noah and the events related to him were taken just as a legendary tale. However, accounts of these events are recorded in both the Bible and the Quran.

If the story of Noah was true, Jewish and Christian scholars were faced with the task of providing historical proof of it. Research on this subject has continued right up to the present. The story of Noah's Ark was recounted in detail in the Bible; that was why the scholars of the Bible took great interest in it. They began to investigate this subject on a large scale, particularly of the region where Noah lived according to the Bible.

The Difference between the Bible and the Quran

Noah's Ark has been mentioned both in the Bible as well as in the Quran. But there is a difference between the two descriptions. The Bible mentions Noah's Ark just as a story of ancient times. But the Quran, besides telling the story of the Ark, has made a prediction. It is that Noah's Ark, having been specially preserved by God, will appear in later times to serve as a lesson to the people. We quote here the relevant verses of the Quran:

“But We saved him and those who were with him in the Ark and made the event a sign for mankind.” (29:15)

“We have left this (Ark) as a sign: but will anyone take heed?” (54:15)

“But We bore you away in the Ark, when the waters rose high, so that We might make it a reminder for you and so that attentive ears might retain it.” (69:11–12)

These verses of the Quran were revealed in the first quarter of the seventh century. At that time, no one in the whole world knew that the Ark had been preserved. Both Arabs and non-Arabs were totally unaware of this matter.

In such a situation the Quran declared that Noah's

Ark was preserved and that it was going to appear in the future. It was an extraordinary prediction. After this prediction, for more than a thousand years people remained in the dark about this. It was at the end of the 20th century that, for the first time, man was able to learn, through aerial photography, that an object resembling an Ark existed on a mountain situated on the eastern border of Turkey.

This appearance of Noah's Ark is a part of great planning on the part of God. Apparently, it is an initial announcement of the end of human history. Noah's Ark symbolically tells man that another major and final flood is in the offing. This flood will mark the end of the first stage of human life and the beginning of the second stage of human life. The present earth was the abode of the first stage of life, while the abode of the second stage of life will be the world Hereafter.

We have been told in the Quran that Noah's Ark was preserved. Its preservation could never have been purposeless. Therefore, it would be right to say that the Ark was preserved so that it might appear before Doomsday as a historical sign. Now, the question arises as to what would be the way of its appearance. On closer inspection we learn that perhaps it is the event of

the second appearance of Noah's Ark which is termed as 'daabba' in the Quran and Hadith.

It is perhaps this event of the appearance of Noah's Ark which is called daabba (82:27) in the Quran. Daabba is, in fact, a symbolic name for Noah's Ark. Daabba literally means 'creeper'. Anything which creeps will be called daabba. Since Noah's Ark sailed the waters like a creeping creature, it may be inferred that symbolically it was termed daabba.

Noah's Ark

One distinguishing feature of Turkey is that it is the country which was the final destination of the Ark of the Prophet Noah. As already mentioned, about five thousand years ago a great flood came during the life of the Prophet Noah. At that time, the Prophet Noah, as commanded by God, boarded an Ark along with the believers. This Ark set sail from ancient Iraq (Mesopotamia) and ran aground on Mount Ararat, which is situated on the eastern border of Turkey.

This event was mentioned in the Bible and the Quran as well as in the form of stories in different books of history. But no one knew with certainty as to where that Ark was. The reason was that in later times, due to

continued snowfall, this Ark was covered with glaciers. In present times, when glaciers began to melt as a result of global warming, the glaciers of Mount Ararat also melted, thus making the Ark visible.

By the end of the 20th century, this Ark was seen from an aeroplane which was flying overhead. When the news spread, a team of experts went up Mount Ararat in 2010 to observe it directly and they brought back a piece of this ark which they intended to subject to scientific scrutiny. The following is the news item published in the Times of India:

A group of Chinese and Turkish evangelical explorers said they believe they may have found Noah's Ark – four thousand meters up a mountain in Turkey. The team say they recovered wooden specimens from a structure on Mount Ararat in eastern Turkey that carbon dating proved was 4,800 years old, around the same time the Ark is said to have been afloat. (The Times of India, New Delhi, April 28, 2010)

Noah's Ark is alluded to in the Quran on several occasions. It is the most ancient reminder of the history of the prophets. According to the Quran, the preservation of this oldest relic was aimed at bringing it to man's knowledge in later periods of history, so that

it might become a historical testament to the truth of religion.

But this was not a simple matter. A number of conditions were required to cause this unique event to take place. It was necessary that it should be in a country which, by its geographical location, was in a position to play this universal role. Then it was necessary that the appearance of the Ark should take place at a given time; that it appeared in the age of universal communication; that it appeared in the age of global tourism; that it appeared in the age of the printing press when the Book of God was available in printed form for distribution; and finally, that it appeared in an age when the world had been rid of religious persecution, rigidity, separatism, narrow-mindedness, and, as a result, the world has reached the age of open-mindedness.

The existence of the Ark on Mount Ararat in Turkey is an exceptional phenomenon. When the glaciers melt to such a level that the whole Ark becomes visible and the place becomes easily accessible to people, this would be such a tremendous event that Turkey would bag the number one position on the tourist map. The whole world would rush to see this oldest, most ancient marvel discovered in Turkey.

In this way the people of Turkey would have a golden opportunity to convey the message of God to the whole world, while staying in their own country. The greatest gift item for the tourists coming to Turkey would be the Quran, the divine book which predicted 1500 years ago the presence of Noah's Ark.

The Historical Ark

The Prophet Noah's Ark was made of wood. Had it been exposed, it would have been reduced to dust over time. But the region of Judi had an extremely cold climate and, after the Ark ran aground, there was continuous snowfall, as a result of which a thick layer of a glacier formed around the Ark. In this way, the Ark remained safe from destruction. In geology, there is a natural process called fossilization (derived from the word fossil). It is a law of nature that whenever something is buried under the earth's surface for a long period, it goes through a particular chemical process and undergoes a transformation. For example, wood and bones become hard and turn into rock. This process of fossilization is usually complete in about a thousand years. After the completion of this process, the object retains its

original form and is converted into rock. In this way its physical form remains preserved forever.

According to His plan, God wanted to preserve Noah's Ark. The great flood was spread over a vast region, possibly from the Rivers Tigris and Euphrates (Iraq) to the eastern borders of Turkey. The Ark sailed over the floodwaters. According to God's will, while sailing over the waters, the Ark reached the peak of Mount Judi. There the process of fossilization continued over a long period of time, as a result of which the Ark turned into a fossil.

Historical Proof of the Divine Plan

Noah's Ark remained preserved under the sheets of glaciers for several thousand years. According to the law of nature, the Ark underwent a metamorphosis and turned into a fossil. Afterwards, by the end of nineteenth century, when the phenomenon of global warming started, glaciers on the mounts started melting. Finally, when these large glaciers melted and their waters flowed down to the seas, the Ark buried under them was revealed.

It seems that daabba in the Hadith refers to this Ark of Noah. The words of one tradition are very

meaningful: “When daabba is revealed, its head will appear first.” (Al-Tafsir Al-Mazhari, 133/7)

This is the exact description in symbolic language of the way the Ark came to light. Due to global warming, when the ice started melting, naturally the upper portion of the Ark was exposed first, and then gradually the entire Ark was revealed.

On deeper analysis, the whole matter appears to be a divine plan: the choosing of a great flood to destroy the people of Noah, setting the Ark on a specific course towards Mount Judi, the Ark’s becoming overlaid by glaciers, its preservation through the process of fossilization, its exposure in the wake of global warming, the invention of the printing press, modern communications, global tourism and other such factors, all of which made it possible for the Ark to be taken as a point of reference as regards the history of the Prophets and at the same time afforded modern opportunities to communicate the message of the Prophets all over the world.

It is this fact about Noah’s Ark which has been suggested in the Quran in these words: “In the name of God it shall set sail and cast anchor” (41:11).

Geological Evidence

Much research has been conducted on geology in present times. These researches have revealed that several thousand years ago a great flood did inundate the region between Iraq and Turkey. This flood was so great that it destroyed the entire inhabited world of the time. The results of this broad-based research have been published in recent years. One important publication is: Noah's Flood: The Scientific Discoveries About the Event that Changed History, by William Ryan and Walter Pitman, published in 1999 by Simon and Schuster, USA. (320 pages)

These researches have scientifically proved that several thousand years ago the world did witness a great flood. But the researchers, owing to their secular mindset, have to say that the story of Noah, described in the Bible and also in the scriptures of other nations, has been derived from this historical event. To them, this is the mythicization of a historical event. But the right approach is to believe that what has been proved by geological research is a historical affirmation of the Great Flood which has been mentioned in the Bible and the Quran.

The truth is that during the time of the revelation

of the Bible and the Quran, nothing was historically known about the flood which happened during Noah's lifetime. However, the Quran furthermore states that Noah's Ark would appear in the future and historically confirm the truth of Noah's Ark. "We have left this as a sign: but will anyone take heed?" (54:15). The right approach in such a case should be to regard what has been proved by geological research as historical verification of the Quran and the Bible instead of saying that people invented fictional stories on the basis of this great flood of ancient times.

An article entitled, Discovery of human artifacts below Surface of Black Sea backs Theory by Columbia University Faculty of Ancient Flood, by Suzanne Trimel, Columbia University, NYC: Columbia University marine geologists William B.F. Ryan and Walter C. Pitman inspired a wave of archaeological and other scientific interests in the Black Sea region with geologic and climate evidence that a catastrophic flood, 7,600 years ago, destroyed an ancient civilization that played a pivotal role in the spread of early farming into Europe and much of Asia. The National Geographic Society offered astonishing evidence to support Ryan's and Pitman's theory: the discovery of well-preserved

artifacts of human habitation more than 300 feet below the Black Sea surface, 12 miles off the Turkish coast. "This is stunning confirmation of our thesis," Dr. Ryan said from his office at Columbia's Lamont-Doherty Earth Observatory on Tuesday. "This is amazing. It's going to rewrite the history of ancient civilizations, because it shows unequivocally that the Black Sea flood took place and that the ancient shores of the Black Sea were occupied by humans." Inspiring a re-examination of the role of climate in human history, Drs. Ryan and Pitman's findings in 1996 suggested that the terrifying and swift flood may have cast such a long shadow on succeeding cultures that it inspired the biblical story of Noah's ark. Drs. Ryan and Pitman argued their provocative theory in a 1999 book, "Noah's Flood: The New Scientific Discoveries about the Event That Changed History" (Simon & Schuster). Ryan and Pitman theorized that the sealed Bosphorus strait, which acted as a dam between the Mediterranean and Black Seas, broke open when climatic warming at the close of the last glacial period caused icecaps to melt, raising the global sea level. With more than 200 times the force of the Niagara Falls, the thundering water flooded the Black Sea, then no more than a large lake, raising

its surface up to six inches per day and swallowing 60,000 square miles in less than a year. (www.earth.columbia.edu)

Lesson from History

For secular scholars the Great Flood, or the discovery of the Ark on Mount Ararat, is just a subject of history. In fact, this event reminds us that the flood in the times of Noah is a warning in advance of a future great flood, the onset of which will mark the end of the world. This discovery was in the nature of a warning to alert people to the necessity of preparing themselves for that day.

Noah belongs to the pre-historic period. That is why we do not find any reference to him in recorded history. But the Quran states that God will preserve Noah's Ark, so that it may serve as a sign for the people of later times (54:15). The discovery of the Great Flood and of the Ark on Mount Ararat provides a historical verification of this Quranic statement.

The lesson here is a part of a long tradition, recorded in Sahih al-Bukhari, in the words of the angel: "Muhammad is the separator between men." In the original Arabic, the word 'farq' means to 'differentiate' between two things.

This tradition means that the mission undertaken by the Prophet Muhammad will separate the righteous from the unrighteous, so that God may grant His reward to one group and punishment to the other.

This holds true not only for the Prophet of Islam. Rather it is true of all the prophets of God. All the messengers were sent by God to bring about such initiatives as might separate the good people from the bad, so that the decree of awarding heaven or hell might justly be passed.

There are at least two prophets who came in ancient times, who have left behind them such historical evidence as may serve as a permanent historical reminder to the people of the divine plan.

One historical example relates to the Prophet Moses. Moses performed his dawah work in ancient Egypt. As a result, a time came when the good and the evil were separated. The Israelites accepted the message of Moses, while Pharaoh and his people rejected it. Subsequently, according to the divine plan, Moses and his people were separated (from the bad) and saved; while Pharaoh and his people were drowned in the sea. Mentioning this event, the Quran says: “So We shall save your body this day, so that you may serve as a sign for those who come after you.” (10:92).

God's words came true and the Pharaoh, Moses' contemporary, was saved in a mummified state inside a pyramid in Egypt. His body lay there, but no one knew of this. At the end of the nineteenth century, a group of western experts brought the body out of the pyramid and carried out investigations by which they succeeded in finding out its exact date through carbon dating. It was scientifically proved that the body was of the Pharaoh who was Moses' contemporary.

The preservation of the body of Pharaoh was not a simple matter. It symbolizes a historical event. This body of Pharaoh, which remains preserved in the Cairo Museum, mutely conveys what is going to happen with man – that is, according to the divine plan, the righteous will be separated from the unrighteous and then the righteous will be rewarded with an honourable place in eternal paradise, while the unrighteous will be cast into eternal hell to lead lives of humiliation.

Another example of this kind is that of Noah. He lived in the region of ancient Iraq (Mesopotamia). For a long period of time he continued to warn people that they had not been created by God without a purpose. Rather, they were being tested; and were under God's watchful eye to ascertain who was using his freedom properly or misusing it.

When this period of testing was over, God's decree would be passed, and the good and the bad would be separated from one another. Then, the good would be ushered into paradise, while the bad would be consigned to hell.

Prior to the flood, God commanded Noah to build an ark. So the ark was built in advance. Noah and the believers boarded this ark which sailed across the waters. Thus, they saved themselves from drowning in the flood. At that moment what God said to them is recorded thus in the Quran: "God said, 'Noah, go ashore in peace; our blessings upon you and upon the people who are with you and upon some of the descendants of those who are with you. [As for the unrighteous] We shall grant provision for a time, then a grievous punishment from Us shall afflict them.'" (11:48)

This event took place five thousand years ago, when no civilization or technology had been developed, and although this was mentioned in the Bible and the Quran, people regarded it as a religious myth. How strange it is that by the end of the twentieth century these events became known to people. On the one hand, scientific studies have found such evidence in Iraq and Syria as indicates widespread flooding in this region in the past, and on the other hand, Noah's Ark,

which had lain submerged under mounds of ice, stood exposed with the melting of the glaciers. This incident took place on a mount on the eastern border of Turkey.

By the middle of the 20th century, the story of the deluge of Noah's time, so long dismissed as legendary, had at last come to be recognized as a historical disaster for which material evidence was found in the soil of Ur. (Wooly, Abraham, p. 170)

Archeological evidence has established the reality of the flood. (Marston, *The Bible Comes Alive*, p.33)

Both Sumerian and Hebrew legends speak of a flood which destroyed the habitable world as they knew it. (Lt. Col. Wagstaff, a distinguished explorer)

The same is the case with Noah's Ark. In ancient times, Noah's Ark was also regarded as a religious myth. But now it has become a historical fact.

Anyone can see the Ark if he flies over the hills situated on the eastern border of Turkey. Soon a time will come when this spot will become a major attraction for tourists. It is in the news that the Turkish government is planning to develop the region as a tourist destination. According to the teachings of Islam, when the end of human history approaches, paving the way to the hereafter, the Angel Israfil will

blow the trumpet. This trumpet will herald the coming of a new age.

The appearance of Noah's Ark is an incident of this nature, the only difference being that the reality will be proclaimed in the form of words, while the same reality is being proclaimed by the Ark in silent language.

Two members of the search team that claims to have found Noah's Ark on Mount Ararat in Turkey responded to skepticism by saying that there is no plausible explanation for what they found other than it is the fabled biblical boat that weathered a storm that raged 40 days and 40 nights and flooded the entire Earth. Noah's Ark Ministries International (NAMI) held a press conference on April 25, 2010, in Hong Kong to present their findings and say they were "99.9 percent sure" that a wooden structure found at a 12,000-ft. elevation and dated as 4,800 years old was Noah's Ark. Noah's Ark Ministries International is a subsidiary of Hong Kong-based Media Evangelism Limited, founded in 1989 which avails of the multi-media to promote evangelizing. "We don't have anything to hide," says Ms. Wei, who is a team member. She says that massive wooden planks, some 20 meters long, were found in wooden rooms and hallways buried

in the ice atop Mount Ararat in eastern Turkey. People could not have carried such heavy wood to such a height, nor could vehicles have accessed such a remote location on the mountain. Turkish officials from Agri Province, the location of Mount Ararat, also attended this week's press conference in Hong Kong. Lieutenant Governor Murat Güven and the Cultural Ministry's Director, Muhsin Bulut, both provincial officials, believe the discovery is most probably Noah's Ark, according to the announcement posted on the team's website. The Culture and Tourism Minister of Turkey, Ertugrul Gunay, welcomed the finding and said it could boost tourism, according to Turkish newspaper Zaman. (www.csmonitor.com)

Noah's Ark and Daabba

The Quran states: 'when God's word is justly carried out against them, we will produce a daabba from the earth which will tell them that mankind has no real faith in Our signs' (27:82).

It is stated in both the Quran and the Hadith, that a daabba will appear before Doomsday. The appearance of daabba will, as it were, mark the end of the first phase of human history and the beginning of the second

phase of human history. The appearance of daabba will practically be akin to the final communication of the message to all mankind. Subsequently, the same event will take place, as had taken place during the times of Noah, but on a far greater scale. That is, the saving of the righteous people and the destroying of the unrighteous people in the wake of a great flood.

There are many traditions regarding daabba in the books of Hadith, but the most authentic and reliable is the one which has been recorded by Sahih Muslim. This tradition tells us only this that a daabba will appear before Doomsday (Hadith no.158).

This tradition does not contain additional details, such as the daabba possessing the staff of Moses and the ring of Solomon, etc. These different reports also contradict one another. That is why those Ulama, for instance, Imam Razi, Allama Aloosi, Allama Albani, etc., who have done research on these traditions, have concluded that these traditions are not authentic. The right approach in this matter is to take daabba in the sense of daabba only and all other associated details should be ignored as unauthentic.

Research into Daabba

Daabba literally means a creeper. In its usage, the word daabba is not used only for animals, but is used rather for anything which creeps or moves slowly. This usage is found both in Arabic and other languages. For instance, the word 'creep' by extension is used to convey slow motion in every language, as when a train moves slowly in dense fog, it is said that 'the train is creeping along.'

American novelist James Baldwin, in one of his stories, writes this sentence about a boat: 'The old boat creeps over the water no faster than a snail.'

In chapter 27 of the Quran, the word 'takallum' for daabba is not used in the sense of yantequ but is used rather in the sense of yadullu. That is, to bear witness. The word 'kalam' has been used in this same sense in the Quran in several places, for instance in chapter 30, the Quran has this to say: 'Have we sent down to them any authority which speaks in favour of what they associate with Him?' (30:35).

The verse of the Quran which mentions daabba has three parts to it:

- i) When God's word is justly carried out against them,
- ii) We will produce a daabba from the earth

iii) Which will tell them that mankind had no real faith in Our signs. (82:27)

The first part of the verse relates to God's decree, that is, daabba will be produced when God decrees the end of human history in this present world. The next part of the verse deals with natural circumstances, that is, when owing to natural causes the ice cover is removed from daabba (that is, the Ark) and it is laid bare for all to see.

The third part of the verse deals with human beings, that is, when this occurrence takes place, it will become man's responsibility to inform people of this event and its history and make people abreast of the lesson it contains. One aspect of the third part of the verse, which relates to man, is that the believers in the Quran should rise and convey the message of the Quran to all mankind because the appearance of daabba will be a confirmation of the prediction made in the Quran.

This event will be an invitation to people to study the Quran as the Book of God and through it, accept as an established fact, the message which was sent by God through His prophets.

The Reason for Selecting the Ark

The blowing of the trumpet by the Angel Israfil will be the declaration of Doomsday in spoken words while Noah's Ark (daabba) is a declaration of Qiyamah in an unspoken language. The same reality which the trumpet of Israfil will proclaim in words, will be declared in silent language by Noah's Ark. What was the reason for selecting the Ark for this purpose? By taking into account the following aspects we can understand why the Ark was possibly the best medium for this purpose in ancient times.

- i) According to God's Way (Sunnah) a disguised name was required for the Ark. This purpose was easily served by using the word 'daabba' for the Ark.
- ii) For this purpose something was required which could move from one place to another in the flood by sailing and this could be achieved only by a boat.
- iii) For this purpose such a method was required as would save some people and destroy others. This was also only possible by means of an ark.
- iv) For this purpose, such a thing was required, which could be preserved for several thousand years under sheets of ice and later be exposed before man at an appointed time.

v) Another advantage of the ark was that it could be preserved by the natural chemical process of fossilization, so that it might serve as a sign for later generations. Furthermore, in accordance with the way (Sunnah) of God (6:8), an ark was the only thing for which a disguised name was available in the form of daabba. According to the way of God, referring to the Ark as “ark” was not desirable. Rather, referring to it by some indirect name was desirable, so that people might ponder over it to understand its significance. For this purpose, daabba was the most appropriate name, for the ark creeps over water, and the literal meaning of daabba is ‘creeper’. The Quran states that when the time will come, ‘We will produce a daabba from the earth’ (27:82). These words very aptly indicate the real occurrence – the Ark which lay covered under the thick layer of ice (as glaciers) gradually became exposed following global warming, which led to the melting of ice caps. The word ‘creeper’, coming out of the earth, literally portrays this event, exactly as it happened.

While mentioning daabba, the Quran only states that daabba will ‘speak’ to people and tell them that they did not believe in God’s signs. This is all that we are told about it. The Quran does not say anything about the response of the people, whether or not they will

believe. Thus, it is not proved from the Quran that after listening to daabba, people will become believers.

We can infer from this that the appearance of Daabba (Ark) will again be of the same nature as that of the time of Noah. Noah communicated the message of God to people for a very long time, but very few believed in him. The same would take place in later times as well. That is, this second time, only some will give a positive response and the majority will ignore the message.

The truth is that in later times the appearance of Daabba (Ark) will only mark the announcement. This will not result in all the people becoming believers, i.e. that there will be no one who denies God.

Reminders of the Prophets

Right from Prophet Noah to the Final Prophet, Muhammad, many prophets were sent by God to the world. But there are three prophets – Noah, Abraham and Muhammad (PBUH), whose material remains symbolically tell us of three stages of dawah. The first material remains is that of Noah which is in the form of the Ark. This ark symbolically tells us that man will not be left to do his own will, but that all the people will finally be divided into two groups. This division

will be based on the record of their deeds. People who have a record of good deeds to their credit will be held deserving of paradise and those who have bad deeds to their credit will be consigned to hellfire.

The second material reminder is that of the Prophet Abraham. This exists in Makkah even today in the form of the Kabah. The Kabah is a symbolic reminder of that extraordinary planning according to which Abraham settled his wife Hajira and son Ismail in the desert region of Arabia. After a long period that generation came into existence who are known as the Ishmaelites. The Prophet and the Companions of the Prophet were the select members of this race. This was an exceptional group which is termed by an orientalist 'a nation of heroes'.

The third material reminder is that of the Prophet Muhammad, which exists in the form of the Masjid-i-Nabwi in Medina. The Prophet's grave is also inside this mosque.

The extraordinary struggle by the Prophet and his Companions ushered in a new age in human history. This new age marks the end of the age of shirk (polytheism) and beginning of the age of tawheed (monotheism). The Prophet Muhammad and his Companions instigated a new process in human history. Consequently, that

revolution occurred which has been called in the Quran Izhaar-e-din (48:28).

Izhaar-e-din does not refer to any political Izhaar (ascendancy). In actual fact, it refers to an all-encompassing Izhaar, one which is of a far vaster nature. Consequently, that global event took place which may be termed an explosion of opportunity.

Through the Prophet Muhammad and his Companions, a process was started which has reached its culmination in the twenty-first century. This revolution has several aspects. For instance, religious freedom, scientific evidence in favour of monotheism, global communications, global mobility, the printing press, the decentralization of political power, the coming of the age of institutions, etc. One of these modern opportunities relates to the appearance of Noah's Ark as a result of global warming, which lay hidden under mounds of ice for several thousand years.

The Appearance of Daabba

Chapter 27 of the Quran describes a sign of God which will appear before Doomsday: When God's word is justly carried out against them, We will produce a daabba

from the earth which will tell them that mankind had no real faith in Our signs (27:82).

This verse of the Quran had remained unclear for the last fourteen hundred years. But in the light of the information we have gathered in recent years regarding Noah's Ark, we can safely infer that daabba refers to Noah's Ark, that is, daabba which creeps over water. The Quran calls Noah's Ark a sign. This similarity between Noah's Ark and daabba is extremely meaningful. From the very beginning of human history, God planned to send His prophets in every age to inform man of the creation plan of God. But man, owing to his haughtiness, ignored the prophets to the extent that the prophets could not even find a place in recorded human history. The prophets became a matter of belief rather than a matter of established history. Consequently, man apparently knew about creation but he remained totally ignorant of the purpose of creation.

We are told this in the above-mentioned verse of the Quran. This verse explains that before Doomsday this myth would be destroyed. The means of destroying this myth will be the appearance of a historical sign of a prophet who is mentioned in both the Bible and the Quran. In this way a religious belief will become

scientific evidence (established truth). As mentioned above, daabba literally means a creeper. Noah's Ark was a vehicle, which crept over water. Creeping over the floodwaters it reached the Mount Ararat situated on the border of Turkey.

Now in the twenty-first century this matter (Noah's Ark) has become a reality. The time is going to come very soon when its existence will make it as clear as daylight to those who had been refuting God's signs how mistaken they were in doing so, for it will communicate to them, albeit in silent language, what the actual truth of the matter is. It will be right there before their eyes..

The Prophet Noah told his people directly and all humanity indirectly about God's creation plan: that man's abode on the planet earth was for a limited period of time (71:4). That is, they have to remain in this world of trial for an appointed time and subsequently they are to appear before God in the life Hereafter. This is the reality of life which Noah and other prophets communicated to man, but this warning of the prophets was eliminated by man from recorded history.

The appearance of daabba is mentioned in both the Quran and the hadith. But at both the places, it is mentioned as a prediction of the future. That is why

there are different opinions of the commentators regarding daabba. After a detailed study, I have reached the above conclusion. According to the information available so far, I think this is the right viewpoint. However, God knows better.

According to God's law, it has happened many times that a community which was addressed by a prophet, rejected his message, and consequently incurred divine punishment. But the form of punishment chosen in the case of the unbelieving communities of other prophets was different from that of Noah's people.

When those who denied their prophets, in spite of their having conveyed the message for a long period with all sincerity and well-wishing, God decreed their punishment. In such cases God asked the prophets and his believing companions to leave that settlement. When they had left the place, that settlement was destroyed (at the local level) either by earthquakes or strong tempests. But in the case of Noah's people, a totally different method was adopted.

The Prophet Noah communicated the message of God to his people over a long period of time. Some believed in him but the majority of them denied his message. Then God commanded Noah to build a

large ark and take aboard on it the believers as well as pairs of animals. When all this work was complete and people had boarded the ark, then waters gushed forth in torrents. Waters came from the earth as well as from the skies. The level of water was so high that it reached the top of the mountains. It was because of this different style adopted that Noah's Ark remained preserved for the coming generations.

What has been said about Noah's Ark in the Quran, is given in detail in the verse mentioning daabba: 'When God's word is justly carried out against them, We will produce a daabba from the earth which will tell them that mankind had no real faith in Our signs' (27:82). 'Signs' here refers to the coming of the prophets in the past. The coming of God's prophet is a sign of God. But in ancient times the contemporaries of the prophets denied them. This fact has been mentioned thus in the Quran: 'Alas for human beings! They ridicule every messenger that comes to them' (36:30).

The prophets being God's signs were judged to be only theoretical evidence, that is why they were denied by their people. Therefore, God wanted to establish material evidence in favour of prophets and prophethood. Noah's Ark, in the sense of daabba, is probably material evidence of this kind.

The appearance of the ark in present times seems to say in a silent language, 'O man, you have denied the Prophet Noah and his divine mission. You have eliminated him from your history as if he did not exist. Now it has become quite clear to you that such a denial is just not possible'. Theoretical evidence calls for voluntary acknowledgement but material evidence entails compulsory acknowledgement. Now man has no logical justification for adopting an attitude of denial with regard to the prophet and his mission.

The appearance of the Ark in present times serves as a great historical argument for the divine religion. But it is very strange that Muslims have had no part to play in bringing this matter to light. All the research on the subject was done by Christian and Jewish scholars. This has come about because, besides in the Quran, Noah's Ark was mentioned in the Old Testament as well. That is why the Jews and the Christians were interested in investigating it. Using modern resources, they investigated this matter and then published their conclusion. It thus became a matter of common knowledge.

The Difference between the Statements in the Quran and the Bible

What is worth mentioning here is that in this matter there is a difference between the statements in the Bible and the Quran. The Bible has mentioned Noah's Ark in detail. But one thing finds no mention in the Bible, and that is the prediction that Noah's Ark will appear in later times and that it will become a sign of God. This aspect of the Ark has been mentioned in the Quran more than once. But this is not touched upon in the Bible.

This was an indication that the followers of the Quran should search for the Ark in later times, so that it might become a strong piece of evidence for the people. This task could have been done only by those who are of a scientific bent. But the Muslims of the present day have no such inclination towards science. The truth is that had Christian and Jewish scholars not investigated this subject, man would perhaps have remained ignorant of this important matter relating to the history of prophethood.

The appearance of the Ark is no simple matter. It

is the annunciation of Doomsday prior to the event. It is the declaration of a great historic event, namely, the Creator informing man of His will through His prophets, and man ignoring it. This is to mark the end of leading a life on earth in which God's creation plan is ignored.

Doomsday is the day when reality will appear in its absolute form. Prior to it, the appearance of Noah's Ark will be the day of the partial appearance of reality. The appearance of the Ark, in calling to mind the fact that the life's plan devised by man's Creator -- information about which was sent by the prophets -- was totally ignored by man, and even eliminated from human history, will serve to bring this deleted chapter of history back to light.

This will be the time to bring before man God's preserved book – the Quran - because the Quran is the only book which describes clearly the history of the prophets and God's creation plan. The appearance of the Ark will be a discovery of a lost chapter of human history and the Quran is an authentic statement of that lost chapter.

Noah's Ark and Turkey

As mentioned above, Noah's Ark set sail from Iraq (Mesopotamia). It could have taken any direction, but it took a particular direction and while sailing a long distance it came to rest on a mountain situated on the eastern side of Turkey.

Why did this happen? There were many places where the Ark could have come to rest. But only one option was selected and that was the mountain in Turkey. This definitely took place under divine guidance. We cannot take it as something casual. It is incumbent upon us to take this happening as divinely planned.

On closer reflection on this matter, we understand that Turkey, due to some special features, was best suited for the role God desired the Ark to play. God in His foreknowledge knew that Turkey would, in the future, be a Muslim country. God knew that Turkey was a country which enjoyed the position of a junction between the eastern and the western world.

God knew that, for various reasons, Turkey would be visited by tourists from all over the world. Along with this, it was also in God's knowledge that, of the long list of Muslim countries, Turkey would be the only country which would be free from religious fanaticism. Owing

to this, Turkey would be the most suitable country for the Ark to perform this desired role.

What is this desired role? It is without doubt dawah work. That is, to inform all men and women of the creation plan of God. For this purpose, Noah's Ark enjoys the position of historical evidence. It is a historical reminder of the divine plan which was executed through the Prophet Noah. Noah's Ark directly serves as physical evidence of Noah's history, while it indirectly serves as material evidence for the history of other prophets.

God desired that, prior to Doomsday, all human beings might be given a clear declaration of what was the creation plan of God with regard to man. Noah's Ark is undeniably a tangible piece of evidence of this creation plan of God. And, for various reasons, Turkey was the most appropriate place for the appearance of this evidence.

It is the need of the hour that the Muslims of the whole world in general, and the Muslims of Turkey in particular, may understand this divine plan and make all the necessary arrangements towards this end. For instance, they should develop the area of the Ark as a tourist spot of a high order. They should provide

tourists with all the facilities for communication and transport. Trained people should be at hand to interact with tourists. A good library should make available translations of the Quran in different languages, either for free distribution or for sale. Arrangements should be made to present to tourists the mission of the prophets with reference to the Ark. It should be that the place of the appearance of Noah's Ark no longer remains just the place of the Ark, but rather becomes a most modern dawah centre in the full sense.

According to the creation plan of God, two floods were preordained for the earth—one, the flood at Noah's time and the other the flood which would mark the end of the world. Noah's Ark serves as a historical reminder of the first flood and the flood which took place in Noah's time serves as a pointer to the second flood.

The appearance of the Ark in the twenty-first century serves as a warning for people to prepare themselves, as the time of the next flood is drawing near.

Fortunate are those who understand this divine plan and by living their lives accordingly become deserving of the great reward. The truth is that the appearance of the Ark, after being buried under sheets of ice for

several thousand years, is the greatest event prior to the blowing of the Trumpet by the angel Israfil. The next event that will take place will be the blowing of the Trumpet which will be a final declaration that the time of action has come to an end and the time of reaping the reward of one's action has begun.

Prediction of Universal Dawah

According to one tradition, the Prophet of Islam observed: 'The day will come when the word of God will enter into every home, big or small of the globe, willingly or unwillingly'. There is nothing mysterious about the coming to pass of this event of universal dawah.

According to the law of nature, this event will take place through human beings with the help of known resources rather than through angels or by miraculous methods.

When God desires some work to be done, conducive circumstances are provided. But this comes about with no prior announcement. As such, it is man's responsibility to exercise his reason in order to understand nature's silent message and make use of it to achieve the desired goal. One example of this is

provided by rain. Rain comes from God but it is the farmer's duty to understand the silent message of rain and make use of it for agriculture.

The same is the case of dawah. The present age is totally a new age. In this age, many things have come into existence that are immensely favourable to dawah. For instance, religious freedom, tourism, the printing press and global transportation for various purposes, modern communications, modes of print media and electronic media, travel facilities, etc.

Such happenings proclaim, albeit in a silent language, that opportunities have opened up to the ultimate extent for performing global dawah as predicted in the hadith. Make use of these opportunities and communicate the message of God to all human beings so that no one inhabiting this globe, whether man or woman, remains unaware of God's creation plan. In ancient times, no great work could be performed without the support of the government, for the government had a monopoly on all resources. In present times, opportunities have been separated from political power.

If the ancient age was one of political power, the present age is the age of institutions and organizations. Now, through institutions and organizations, all those things can be done on a far greater scale that could

formerly be done only partially with government support. Similarly, it has become possible today to establish great dawah empires on a far greater scale than the ancient political empires.

In the circumstances that prevailed in ancient times, a political empire could have been established only in a limited geographical region. In modern circumstances an e-empire can be established without any obstacle right across the globe. These universal possibilities, without doubt, have been generated only for dawah work.

The Mission of the Ummah of the Prophet Muhammad

What is the mission of the Ummah (believers) of Prophet Muhammad? That is only one – to communicate the message of the Prophet Muhammad in all times and to all nations, generation after generation, right till Doomsday. This is the only mission, the only duty, of the believers. Blessings for the believers in this world and in the hereafter depend on the performance of this dawah work. No other work besides this can lead us to success in this world and the next.

The Importance of Noah

The Quran tells us that Noah's ark has been given the status of a sign by God. "We have left this as a sign: but will anyone take heed?" (54:15)

As far as the lesson-giving aspect is concerned, the selection of Noah was most appropriate. Noah was born in the pre-historic age. That is why, for over thousands of years, it was believed that from a purely historical point of view, Noah had never existed at all.

In such a situation, the mention of Noah and his ark in the Bible and the Quran is no simple matter. Its position was that of a prediction about an unknown phase of history.

Looked at from this angle, the discovery of the ark and the flood as a historical event is extremely important. It proves that the statement of the Quran regarding the nature of life is entirely correct. The information given by the prophets about the life hereafter and accountability was totally true. The appearance of daabba is a silent declaration of this reality.

Now the final hour has come for man to rouse himself; to listen to the silent voice of daabba; to study the Quran and plan his actions by keeping the creation plan of God before him. The evidence tells us that human history is evidently nearing its end.

Now man is left with very little time to reform himself. It has now become obligatory for people to prepare for that time, which has been mentioned in these words in the Quran: "And when their term approaches, they can neither delay it by a single moment, nor can they advance it." (7:34)

The Announcement of the Hereafter

God has made the present planet earth as a temporary abode for man. It has a term set for it. The planet's life support system is also provided for this limited period of time.

By God's will, when this limited period comes to an end, the trumpet will be blown instantly. This will be the declaration of the fact that the first stage of human history is over and the time has come for another phase of history for man.

According to the divine plan, in the next phase, this world will be destroyed and another better world will be built. Only those will find a place in it who have proved themselves as deserving candidates for it in the present world.

God desires that, prior to the blowing of the trumpet, such signs will appear as will warn man in

advance about the approaching end of the present world and the beginning of the next world, so that man may reform himself and be found eligible to enter the next world successfully.

For this purpose, God has arranged for an alarm in advance which may be called a wake-up call. There are two chief signs of this alarm or wake-up call – one in nature and the other in history. Circumstances tell us that both kinds of alarms have been rung. But only those can hear it, who have an ear to listen to this silent message.

A very clear example of the alarm of nature is that all the resources which are necessary for supporting life on earth are rapidly being depleted . It would be right to say that these resources have now reached their final stage of exhaustion. We have been told about this in the Quran in advance that the resources necessary for the survival of human life, far from being boundless, are limited. (15:21)

In the present day, just as everything has been subjected to research, in a similar way research is also being carried out on a large scale on natural resources. Here are some of the books based on such research work:

- 1) The Limits to Growth by Donella H. Meadows, Dennis L. Meadows, Jorgen Randers Universe Books, 1972, pp. 205, printed in the USA
- 2) The End of Nature by Bill Mc Kibben, Anchor, 1989, pp. 195, printed in the USA
- 3) Beyond the Limits by Donella Meadows, Dennis Meadows, Jorgen Randers, Chelsea Green, 1992, pp. 320, printed in the USA

These books and other such books tell us that the resources of nature have been limited from the very beginning. Man, particularly in the present age of modern technology, has been making unlimited use of these resources, which our world of limited resources cannot afford. Now these resources have diminished to such an extent that scientists want to develop new ways and means of sustainable development. But the truth is that it is not a case of sustainable development, rather it is a case of the coming to an end of all resources.

This coming of the end of resources has become so certain that some scientists, like Stephan Hawking, have suggested that if we want the human race to survive, we shall have to build space colonies. But, obviously this is a scientific joke rather than any practicable suggestion, in the real sense.

Another aspect of the alarm of Doomsday is what may be called the historical aspect. Perhaps the most prominent example of this historical aspect is the appearance of the Ark of Noah. The appearance of the Ark is no simple matter. It is in fact a confirming statement of the prophetic mission in terms of historical evidence.

The Ark or daabba is providing evidence that Noah and many other prophets came to this world but man ignored them to the extent that he failed to even place them in his recorded history.

The Ark or daabba tells the story of the times when the prophets warned the people of their times that if they did not listen to them, they would be visited by God's chastisement. The Ark of Noah proves the veracity of the coming to pass of such a chastisement (in the form of a flood). It serves as living evidence of God's creation plan.

The Day of Judgment

The Quran was revealed in the first quarter of the seventh century. At that time the present as well as the future of the Ark of Noah remained completely unknown. After the passing of more than one thousand

years of the revelation of the Quran, the statement it contained about the past of the Ark proved completely right.

In this way, it is certain that the statement of the Quran regarding the future of the Ark will also be proved completely true. The statement of the Quran about the past being proved true is in itself a proof that its statement about the future will also be proved true. After the credibility of the Quran has been proved true from one aspect, its credibility is also proved true from another aspect.

The truth is that Noah's Ark represents a history of the prophets. It is historical evidence of God's creation plan and the veracity of the prophetic mission. The appearance of Noah's Ark gives this message to man – O People, the time of Reckoning has come near. Prepare yourself for your appearance before God, before the time comes for the Great Reckoning when one will find oneself face to face with God.

The appearance of Noah's Ark is not just an item of archaeology – rather it is an inevitable part of the creation plan of God. The Ark symbolizes the creation plan of God: why has man been created, and finally what awaits him in terms of this creation plan, in future,

when God will deliver His final judgement regarding man's eternal future in the next life.

Conclusion

The history of man begins from Adam. After that, throughout long periods of history, God appointed and sent His messengers to inform man of His creation plan. What the Creator wants from him in this world; what is going to be his fate in the next world. This dawah work was performed by the prophets over a long period of time. It is mentioned in a tradition of the Prophet that more than 100,000 Prophets came to the world for this purpose.

The second phase may be termed the phase of warning of the coming of Doomsday. That is, warning people in advance of the time which is fast approaching. This warning had to be issued through the reappearance of the Ark or daabba. It appears that this warning has been issued and now the time is not far when the period before Doomsday is over and human history on earth reaches its end.

After this, the third phase will commence with the blowing of the Trumpet by the Angel Israfil. In accordance with Islamic belief, when the time comes

and the respite of action is over, and the time of judgement comes (it is all in the knowledge of God), at that time the Angel Israfil will blow the trumpet and it will, all of a sudden, herald the beginning of the final and eternal phase of human life, as we have been informed by all the Prophets.